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The Alaska Organized Militia is here for the Anchorage community

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — During times of uncertainty, the people of Alaska can depend on the Alaska Organized Militia (AKOM) to be front and center, meeting the challenge with discipline and action.

Consisting of the Alaska National Guard, Alaska State Defense Force, and Alaska Naval Militia, the AKOM is made up of service members devoted to serving the state of Alaska.

For the last month, service members from the Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion have aided Bean's Café, a local non-profit organization, in feeding the homeless.

Scott Lingle, director of food services at Bean's Café, said the National Guard's presence lowers the risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19. Keeping the food preparations to a select group of service members lessens the margin of error and allows Bean's Café to sustain its charitable work.

"It's important to know that the partnership between the National Guard and Bean's Café is enabling us to continue operating right now," Lingle said. "We've had to totally change our model of food service. Logistically, the National Guard has been a lot of help in giving us the ability to make that transition from a dining service that's on premise to a dining service that's being transported out."

Monday through Friday at Bean's Café, Guardsmen have assisted in food preparation and transportation. Lingle said he depends on the National Guard's consistency and professionalism, and never worries about them coming in without their personal-protective equipment.

In the Tikahtnu Commons, members of the Alaska Organized Militia provided support to yet another humanitarian organization, The Food Bank of Alaska. Serving over 70 communities statewide, the Food Bank of Alaska has adapted services to an emergency drive-thru distribution system. Service members aided the effort by directing traffic and expediting allotment of food resources.

Jenny Di Grappa, director of Donor Relations and Communications for The Food Bank of Alaska, said the organized militia has been invaluable in making sure the drive-thru distribution runs smoothly.

"We learned in the first couple distributions that we could not do it alone," Di Grappa said. "We've had between three and four hundred families visit the Tikahtnu site. We engaged the Guard, and that has been instrumental in us, essentially, serving people who need a little help during this time."

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The Food Bank of Alaska has seen a 75-percent increase in the number of families just in the last couple of weeks. Having the AKOM'S support has ensured the food bank meets that demand safely and efficiently.

"Getting food and resources to those that really need it while many choose to self-isolate makes it critical for us to have this support from the Guard," Di Grappa said. "I think the Food Bank of Alaska and the National Guard is only a natural partnership. They're here to serve, and that's what we do every day."

The Alaska Organized Militia continues to serve the Anchorage community and stands ready to answer requests for assistance throughout the state.

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PHOTOS

1. **Flickr link** includes an event album with the complete selection of full-resolution, free downloadable images. (May not be accessible from all military computers.)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/alaskanationalguard/albums/72157713741264467>

2. **DVIDS link to photos and story** (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.)

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/369289/alaska-organized-militia-here-anchorage-community>

VIDEO

1. **Facebook** <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1138083089895280>

2. **DVIDS link** (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.)

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/750763/alaska-organized-militia-serves-anchorage-community>



Chief Quartermaster Michael Dixon, Alaska Naval Militia, directs a car as part of the traffic control support for the Food Bank of Alaska in Anchorage, Alaska, April 20, 2020. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Seth LaCount/Released)



Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers Sgt. Kekoa Maclovesramirez and Staff Sgt. Edward Jones, assigned to the AKARNG Recruiting and Retention Battalion, slice cucumbers for pre-packed lunches in the kitchen at Bean's Cafe in Anchorage, Alaska, Apr. 8, 2020. This food will be distributed to thousands of local Alaskans sheltering at Sullivan and Boeke arenas as well as the Alaska After School Lunch program. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Seth LaCount/Released)



Alaska Army National Guard Sgt. Dylan Granza fills sack lunches at Bean's Cafe in Anchorage, which will be distributed to thousands of Alaskans sheltering at Sullivan and Boeke arenas due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Apr. 8, 2020. Due to a shortage in volunteers amid the pandemic, these AKARNG Soldiers have rallied to help the local communities meet their needs. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Seth LaCount/Released)